

Exploring the Use of Microexpressions in Marketing Research

A presentation of research conducted by Erin L. Percival, with faculty sponsor Dr. Kent Drummond, and support from Wyoming EPSCoR

What is Marketing Research?

- “**Marketing research** is the function which links consumers and the consumer to the organization through information-
Information used to identify and define **marketing** problems; generate, refine, and evaluate **marketing** actions; monitor **marketing** performance; and improve our understanding of **marketing** as a process.”

- American Marketing Association

The Problem

- Marketing Research is often criticized for not truly or fully accessing the qualitative aspects of consumer's feelings towards brands and products.
 - Expensive
 - Time-Consuming
 - Smaller Sample Sizes

"95 percent of all cognition occurs below awareness" (Zaltman).

The Proposed Solution

- Microexpressions could be used to provide marketing researchers with a new way of accessing consumer's raw, unfiltered emotions.

What are Microexpressions?

- A microexpression is a facial expression that lasts less than a quarter of a second, and is a display of one or a combination of forty-three distinct muscle movements that have been identified in the human face.

What are Microexpressions?

- The facial expressions of anger, fear, sadness, disgust, contempt, surprise and happiness are universal – the same for all people.

[Examples of Anger and Disgust](#)

What are Microexpressions?

- It is now believed that microexpressions are most often exhibited when people deliberately try to conceal (or unconsciously repress) their emotions.

About Using Microexpressions

Pros

- Measurable
 - Degree to which an expression is present
- Scientifically Proven
 - Existence, not necessarily % effective
- Can be tracked in real time
 - Possible that a researcher could view the presence of a microexpression as a sign that they should probe further on a certain subject

About Using Microexpressions

Cons

- Training is expensive and time-consuming
- Competes with other types of deception-sensing technology
 - Electroencephalograms (EEGs)
 - Thermal Imaging
 - Near Infrared Laser Spectroscopy
 - Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI)
 - Polygraph
 - Voice-Stress Analysis

Materials Used

- Facial Action Coding System (FACS)
 - Manual and Investigator's Guide
 - 180 hours – studied alone, did not attempt certification test
- Facial Expression.Awareness.Compassion.Emotions. (FACE)
 - Micro Expression Training Tool (METT) - Advanced
 - 35 hours – Received certificate of expertise
 - Did not use Subtle Expression Training Tool (SETT)

Experiment Design

- Held ten experimental sessions to evaluate whether I could detect microexpressions when subjects were told to lie to me about what they felt when looking at a print advertisement
- Heavier emphasis on review of materials and interviews with individuals who actively use/research microexpressions

Conclusions

1. Microexpressions ARE elicited in response to marketing stimuli.
2. FACS (which is necessary for measurement) training is expensive and time consuming – perhaps prohibitively so.
 - \$330 and minimum of 100 hours of study
3. It is not possible to determine WHY or HOW a person is concealing their emotions solely through the study of microexpressions.

New Questions/Further Research

- Is the investment required to train/hire people with the training necessary to detect microexpressions in real time for marketing research purposes justified by the information that is provided?

New Questions/Further Research

- If a subject is believed to be answering questions deceptively are they able/likely to respond truthfully if questioned further?

New Questions/Further Research

- What would a cost/benefit/reliability analysis comparing the use of microexpressions in marketing research to the use of other deception sensing technology reveal?

Thank You For Attending!

Questions?